



**THE TWENTY-SECOND AEM-EU TRADE COMMISSIONER CONSULTATION
22 September 2026, Manila, Philippines**

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

1. The Twenty-second ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) – EU Trade Commissioner Consultation was held on 22 September 2026 in Manila, Philippines. The Consultation was co-chaired by H.E. Ma. Cristina A. Roque, Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry of the Philippines and H.E. Ms. Ditte Juul Jørgensen, Director-General, Directorate-General for Trade and Economic Security, European Commission, representing H.E. Maroš Šefčovič, EU Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency.
2. The Meeting noted that based on ASEAN's preliminary statistics, two-way merchandise trade between ASEAN and the EU reached USD 318.8 billion in 2025, while foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows from the EU to ASEAN amounted to USD 31.3 billion in the same year. These figures placed the EU as ASEAN's third-largest trading partner and largest source of foreign direct investment in 2025, while according to the EU statistics, ASEAN placed as the EU's third-largest trading partner in goods outside Europe.
3. The Meeting exchanged views on regional and global economic developments, noting that rising geopolitical tensions, including unilateral trade actions and regional conflicts collectively threaten the rules-based international order. The Meeting also took note that these developments, compounded by the Middle East crisis which has heightened the volatility in global energy markets – including disruptions to oil and gas supply chains – have inflicted significant costs on businesses, heightened inflationary pressures, and created an increasingly unpredictable operating environment, particularly for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). In this challenging climate, the Meeting stressed that a closer and more substantive economic partnership between ASEAN and the EU is not only essential but also imperative to broaden economic opportunities, diversify markets and sources of supply, and enhance the collective capacity to respond to emerging disruptions. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening trade and investment ties, while advancing deeper and more resilient supply chain integration. In this regard, the Meeting further reaffirmed the importance of dialogue and the shared resolve to pursue constructive engagement to address legitimate trade concerns in a balanced and forward-looking manner, and to refrain from any unilateral measures that could further destabilise global economic conditions.
4. The Meeting welcomed the ongoing implementation of the ASEAN-EU Trade and Investment Work Programme (TIWP) 2026-2027, recognising it as an indispensable framework for guiding, structuring, and deepening the strategic

economic partnership between ASEAN and the EU. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to the full and effective implementation of the TIWP 2026-2027 and called on officials to maintain momentum across all priority areas, with a view to delivering meaningful and impactful outcomes that advance long-term economic interests of both ASEAN and the EU and contribute to a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable regional economy.

5. The Meeting noted the ongoing work of the ASEAN-EU Joint Working Group on Trade and Investment (JWG-TI) and the Technical Experts Group including progress on the ASEAN-EU Digital Trade Principles (DTP). The Meeting welcomed the constructive engagement between both sides and encouraged the ASEAN-EU JWG-TI and the Technical Experts Group to maintain the positive momentum and continue working to finalise the ASEAN-EU DTP as soon as possible. The Meeting underscored that the ASEAN-EU DTP would serve as a non-legally binding framework reflecting ASEAN and the EU's shared ambitions and aspirations on key aspects of digital trade. The Meeting also highlighted that the ASEAN-EU DTP would contribute to strengthening ASEAN-EU cooperation on digital trade and provide useful basis for further collaboration in this area.

6. The Meeting noted the progress in the implementation of the EU-ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package – Trade (SCOPE Trade) and the Technical Assistance Facility to the Green Team Europe Initiative (TAF-GTEI), recognising both initiatives as important and impactful vehicles for sustainable economic cooperation supported by the EU's Global Gateway. The Meeting acknowledged that SCOPE Trade's targeted capacity building support on topics such as the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement has been instrumental in helping ASEAN Member States strengthen their trade-related institutional frameworks and enhance their readiness to engage in and benefit from international trade, while the TAF-GTEI has played a valuable role in mobilizing the EU's expertise on green and circular economy to accelerate ASEAN's decarbonization efforts and support the region's transition towards a more sustainable, inclusive, and climate-resilient economy. The Meeting expressed appreciation for EU's continued commitment to these programmes and looked forward to their continued effective implementation, recognising that they represent a concrete and meaningful expression of the EU's partnership with ASEAN in support of the region's long-term sustainable development goals.

7. The Meeting noted the discussions at the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé, Cameroon from 26 – 29 March 2026. The Meeting reaffirmed both sides' strong commitment to upholding an open, predictable, transparent, free, fair, inclusive, sustainable, and rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core. The Meeting underscored the urgency of delivering meaningful and comprehensive WTO reform to improve all its functions, including the dispute settlement system, and to equip the WTO with the tools necessary to address the realities of today's global economy. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to work in close coordination to advance a reformed, revitalised and effective WTO. The Meeting also recognised the positive role that plurilateral initiatives play at the WTO, including the Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs) in fostering new ideas, advancing discussion on emerging trade issues and building the momentum toward multilateral outcomes.

8. The Meeting appreciated the continued contributions of the EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC), including its workplan and business engagement activities in 2026. The Meeting noted EU-ABC's recommendations in priority areas such as digital economy and the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA), sustainability and circular economy, trade facilitation including customs and the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) implementation, as well as sectoral initiatives in health, and transport. The Meeting also acknowledged the EU-ABC's continued support through business missions, consultations, and flagship events such as the ASEAN-EU Business Summit.

9. The Meeting welcomed Timor-Leste's accession as the 11th Member State of ASEAN and looked forward to its closer engagement in ASEAN-EU meetings and economic cooperation mechanisms. The Meeting acknowledged Timor-Leste's continued efforts to advance its effective participation and full integration to ASEAN, including through the implementation of its ASEAN economic commitments in the *Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN*. In this regard, the Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to continue providing the necessary capacity-building and technical assistance to support Timor-Leste's effective integration into the regional economy.
